

#FOOD

Red Meat Roadmap of Bangladesh

Bangladesh's food scene is like an explosion of flavours with something for everyone. At Star Lifestyle, this got us curious — what are some of the most popular and unique red meat dishes that Bangladesh has to offer? With that question in mind, we embarked on a voyage lasting two long months to discover and bring our readers a taste of Bangladesh's red meat marvels.



The idea was to map out the regional specialities but as soon as the brainstorming sessions started, this was proving to be rather difficult. When it came to popular red meat dishes, some names instantly popped into our minds — haleem, nehari, chaap, kofta kebabs, jhura mangsho, mutton kosha — the list was endless. These dishes are loved and eaten all over the country and as such, there was no way to pin them in one district or division.

So, we started delving much deeper to bring out the regional delicacies that make Bangladeshi cuisine so diverse. And what a treasure trove we unearthed!

Dhaka's love affair with kachchi biriyani came as no surprise. We know it, we love it, and Dhakaiya kachchi with its distinct flavour profile most definitely deserved a spot on our map.

Chattogram, much like Dhaka, boasted some undisputed champions like kala bhuna, chanar daal beef, and akhni biriyani — which shared a close kinship with Sylhet's akhni polao.

These were the easy bits though. When scouring the Internet, every possible platform gave us the same names all over the country but that could not be right! Thus began the next phase of the research. We turned into "call centre agents", making countless phone calls throughout the day, talking to regional journalists of The Daily Star, local restaurants, chefs, and pretty much anyone who could help us.

We knew for a fact that kala bhuna could not possibly belong to every district in the country, so bringing people out of that box was a task on its own. There was an elaborate and rather complicated Microsoft Excel sheet involved, no less!

Venturing a little further from the bustling capital, we found Gazipur offering a unique take on beef — a curry that combined succulent meat with jackfruit. While this dish is popular across the nation, Gazipur, being the heartland of this giant fruit, has perfected this generation-old recipe!

Sylhet, of course, had the iconic shatkora beef, also known as Sylheti beef, holding its crown as the region's signature dish. But among our interesting finds, Sunamganj offered the delectable mangsher pitha.

Barishal, while being renowned for its diverse fish dishes, surprised us with two local favourites — beef cooked in a unique blend of mustard oil and tomato sauce, and a beef curry that incorporated the freshness of raw papaya.

Rangamati threw a curveball with its buffalo skin curry, a dish as unique as its name and a favourite among the locals.

Beef alu ghati, a dish featuring beef

and potatoes in a flavourful gravy, secured its place on our map for its immense popularity across Rajshahi division, especially in Rajshahi City, Bogura, and Naogaon.

Perhaps, one of the most intriguing finds on our journey was bot khichuri, a popular street food in Rangpur. This dish features cow entrails cooked into a spicy curry and served with khichuri. While the name might not be the most enticing, the flavours of this dish are sure to delight the adventurous gourmand.

Khulna's chuijhal has become a popular dish across the country in recent years. But did you know that in Khulna itself, it is mutton chuijhal that reigns supreme? A delightful surprise, indeed! Meanwhile, beef with cabbage is more commonly found in households than in restaurants.

Although our research revealed a greater amount of beef dishes than other meat, it is perhaps mostly about beef being more common/popular than its counterparts. Make of the dishes on our map, like ata daal gosht, chuijhal, and mustard oil meat, have their version of mutton as well as beef.

A delightful discovery was milli/menda

bhaat, a hearty dish prevalent across Tangail, Jamalpur, Sirajganj, and many other districts in Bangladesh. Each region has its twist on this dish, but the core elements remain the same — minced or ground meat (usually beef or mutton) cooked with lentils and rice.

This culinary voyage proved to be something much greater than anticipated, with finding dishes that were exclusively ours and letting each division and district have their best red meat delicacies brought out.

So, there you have it, a glimpse into the diverse and delectable world of red meat dishes in Bangladesh. This is just a taste, and there's so much more to discover. The next time you travel across Bangladesh, be sure to embark on your own culinary adventure and savour the hidden gems waiting to be explored!

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Photo: Sazzad Ibne Sayed

